

A community of citizenship learners

Sir Bernard Lovell School

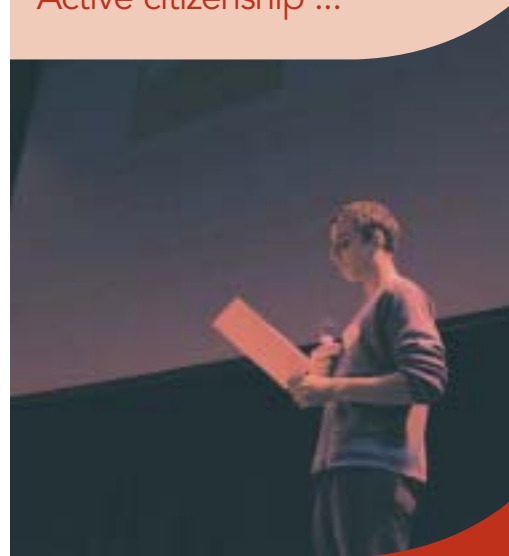
About the school

Sir Bernard Lovell School is an expanding, mixed 11–19 comprehensive school and language college maintained by South Gloucestershire Council. There are 1,350 pupils on roll, with about 180 in the post-16 centre. About half of year 11 students continue into the post-16 centre and around two-thirds of post-16 leavers go on to higher education.

The school is part of the Kingswood partnership, which is a 14–19 pathfinder. It is made up of seven institutions offering over 50 GCSE, GNVQ, AS, BTEC, AVCE and A2 courses. Members of the partnership share resources and extra-curricular activities.

The school's vision statement and student outcomes in the plan for continuous improvement embrace a clear ethos of citizenship. The school offers a wide range of activities, opportunities and experiences to develop citizenship skills through the 14–19 pathfinder.

'Active citizenship ...



... has given students
real choice'

Citizenship staffing

The school's headteacher is also chair of the Kingswood partnership. His leadership and drive have created a new kind of learning environment in the school, which has become a 'community of learners' in which skills and wider achievements are valued.

The curriculum leader for humanities has overall responsibility for citizenship in the school. The member of staff who leads citizenship post-16 has a varied employment background and a broad experience outside education. The six members of staff in the post-16 core team teach citizenship and take a leading role on topics relevant to their specialism. Training is provided for specific events, as necessary.

The citizenship programme

Sir Bernard Lovell School takes a whole-school approach to citizenship and the post-16 programme has to be seen in the light of students' earlier experience.

Citizenship at key stage 3

For students in years 7, 8 and 9, citizenship is delivered through personal development sessions, cross-curricular opportunities (particularly in English, history and geography) and extra-curricular and/or community-based opportunities. Key topics include voting, ID citizenship, changing things, environmental issues, multicultural Britain, ending global hunger, and the young citizen and the law.

Citizenship at key stage 4

All year 10 students undertake 'the personal challenge' for two hours a week (8% of curriculum time). This is delivered through a modular framework covering aspects of the PE, RE, PSHE, citizenship and careers/work-related learning. Each module takes six weeks to complete and involves students working in groups of 20 to address aspects of citizenship such as:

- understanding the criminal justice system and the consequences of crime in society
- improving skills in explaining a point of view and understanding other people's points of view
- critically examining the influence of the media on issues concerning beliefs and ethics
- awareness of rights and responsibilities in work
- managing the school website and persuading young people to take an interest in the school community
- taking part in fair trade activities, including influencing shopping habits
- increasing understanding of moral and ethical issues in the light of modern scientific developments such as genetic engineering, cloning and euthanasia.

ASDAN awards are used to accredit learning (including relevant learning elsewhere on the timetable).

GCSE (short course) Citizenship Studies is also offered as an option in years 10 and 11. Students spend one hour a week on discrete citizenship studies. Other aspects of the course are delivered through subjects such as business, media, drama and modern foreign languages. The course is divided into three themes: human rights and power, politics and the media, and the global village. Students have to take part in an activity based in the community or in school, and produce evidence of their involvement.

Post-16 citizenship

The post-16 active citizenship programme at Sir Bernard Lovell School is designed to fit in with the AQA AS/A2 General Studies course that was already an established part of the curriculum. The five areas of study in the course (society and politics, industry and commerce, beliefs and values, arts and media, and science and technology) provide the focus for citizenship activities.

In addition, separately timetabled time is devoted to citizenship. Citizenship skills, knowledge and understanding are developed through a combination of:

- induction
- personal research study (level 3) or personal challenge (level 2)
- active citizenship (incorporating AS/A2 General Studies)
- enrichment opportunities.

What activities do post-16 students do?

Induction

All students are introduced to the post-16 key skills and active citizenship programme during induction week at the start of year 12.

The school uses the Be Real Game as preparation for post-16 learning, adult life and citizenship concepts. This involves students taking on adult roles to tackle matters of financial literacy and social and economic policy, and gives them opportunities to engage with professionals and the real world.

At the start of the game, the students have opportunities to discuss and form opinions on issues such as student loans, benefits, taxation, national insurance, housing, transport and employment. They then work together in communities to face real-life social and/or environmental 'not in my backyard' scenarios, such as housing for asylum seekers or where a new car breaker's yard should be sited. Having researched and formed views on the proposal, the students reach a consensus view in their community and present this view to a 'planning committee'. Other students try to influence decisions before taking part in the decision-making process (for example through a democratic vote).

Personal research study or personal challenge

The personal research study or challenge lies at the heart of post-16 citizenship at Sir Bernard Lovell. This is differentiated to meet the needs of individual students:

- level 3 students produce a piece of extended research – a personal research study – based on areas of their study, an active involvement outside school, or a combination of both
- level 2 students complete a broad range of challenges covering areas of interest that are relevant to their plans and aspirations. Students are responsible for selecting the challenges they will do and also organise themselves a one-day-a-week work placement.

Active citizenship through general studies

All year 12 students take AQA AS General Studies and can progress – voluntarily – to A2 General Studies. The course offers students the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of, and skills in, political literacy and social and moral responsibility through a series of activities.

Virtual Parliament

'Virtual Parliament' is a sequence of activities designed to increase students' knowledge and understanding of parliament and democratic processes, and to develop their skills in communication, representation, research and decision-making. The students work in groups to develop policies for education, housing, transport and health. They join a political party, gain an understanding of party policies and take on party roles, learning about 'who's who' in the House of Commons and the role of the House of Lords. They take part (in role) in debates, make decisions and vote in a House of Commons simulation.

This activity is followed by a visit to the House of Commons and a question-and-answer session with the local MP. They also have the opportunity to take part in the Bar National Mock Trial competition organised by the Citizenship Foundation.

Students take written, knowledge-based tests at the start and finish of this unit to assess their knowledge of the UK political system.

Globalisation

The organisation 'People and Planet' comes into school to run a three-hour workshop. This is designed to engage young people in globalisation issues, fair trade and international citizenship.

As a result of the workshop, a group of 25 to 30 students signed up to join a network of active students and create a nation of Fair Trade schools and colleges. Members of the group now take positive action, make presentations and are planning to run a shop to educate the school about global poverty and fair trade.

Euro-centricity

'Euro-centricity' is a three-hour session that has been designed to raise awareness, increase knowledge and develop understanding of European cultures, laws and politics.

Students work in teams to represent different EU member states (the size of the team reflects the size of the country), competing to complete over 35 different activities and claim credits on their Euro-centricity passports.

After taking part in this unit, some students have joined a programme of European work experience. Others have visited Belgium to investigate EU institutions and meet a member of the European Parliament.

Citizenship and science

CitizenScience events held at Explore@Bristol enable students to meet specialists and engage in discovery, discussion and debate. This helps them to form decisions about their own opinions and decide what action they want to take in response to issues.

Enrichment opportunities

In September 2002, the school's enrichment opportunities booklet stated: 'As you move towards becoming a young adult you may wish to take on more responsibility, get things changed. Don't just moan about things that could be better – do something about them.'

As this suggests, sixth-formers at the school are actively encouraged to participate in, and take responsibility for, many aspects of school and community life. In doing so, they also investigate, reflect on and think critically about citizenship issues.

A wide range of enrichment opportunities are on offer, including:

- Community Sports Leader Award
- library support
- a buddy scheme
- a paired reading scheme
- a literacy scheme
- student lunchtime support
- subject mentors.

Students also have opportunities to take part in the school council, which meets regularly to consider issues raised by year councils (these in turn consider issues discussed by tutor teams). Two representatives, one from post-16, sit as observers on the governors' curriculum committee and on the full governing body. There is also a termly meeting with the school's management team to discuss the running of the school. Students have their own area on the school website.

More specifically dealing with sixth-form issues, the post-16 forum is a group of volunteer students who address the needs of post-16 students and tackle any difficult issues with staff. The group meets every week and receives training in areas such as forum dynamics and management, fundraising, assertiveness and conflict management, and team building.

Recognising and assessing achievement

All students' work is accredited using ASDAN awards, from bronze award to universities level. Most students work towards the gold award.

All year 12 students follow the AQA AS General Studies course and around 90% of students are entered for the exam each year. This course gives students an opportunity to develop all six key skills.

All year 12 students also work towards a key skills qualification. The ASDAN universities award provides a single form of accreditation that covers key skills, work experience and citizenship, and is a way of placing more value on non-academic qualifications and raising the profile of citizenship. The focus is on wider key skills and evidence is collected through the personal research study or challenge. The award was introduced for all year 12 students in September 2002.

A number of students use the experience they gain from active citizenship opportunities such as the post-16 forum and Community Sports Leader Award activities to provide evidence for the Millennium Volunteers Certificate.

The school has introduced Progress File in years 9 and 10 and is piloting 'Progress File widening horizons online' with all year 12 students. This is intended to complement the development of online individual learning plans (ILPs) for all students.

What do staff think?

Staff involved in post-16 citizenship education at the school are very positive about what it offers students:

'I genuinely believe the things we have done in the context of citizenship have provided a whole raft of new activities to support learners. We can build on what we have done to develop them further. It has been a natural process that has developed its own momentum. The students are involved in this momentum and are jointly driving things forward.'

(sixth-form tutor)

'The post-16 active citizenship programme has an important part to play in the development of students as active citizens within the institution. The development of a strong student voice creates beneficial school self-evaluation. The programme links with the school's intention that students have more of a say in how the school is run. Through the activities, students can develop the skills to make a difference within the school community – realistically to be able to work more effectively with those in a position to make the changes.'

(director of post-16 centre)

'Active citizenship has been closely linked with development of the key skills and all the activities have created evidence for wider key skills in particular. Students have been involved with working in teams in a variety of different scenarios that have provided opportunities to practise and reinforce team skills. The activities have been genuine opportunities – real experiences, not artificially created. Active citizenship has given the students real choice of activities to be involved with. It allows them to grow as independent learners able to move away from a dictated curriculum.'

(post-16 key skills coordinator)

Future developments

The school's pathfinder status and involvement in developing a model for 14–19 education in England has provided a catalyst to incorporate changes that support citizenship (in particular the development of student voice, use of wider accreditation routes, ILPs, the extranet, e-learning, development time for staff and time for student guidance).

The school plans to move forward by increasing opportunities for students to become involved in curriculum design and making decisions about their learning. It recognises that activities introduced through citizenship generate opportunities for students to build on their own learning and identify new opportunities for learning.

The school is prioritising the development of opportunities for student empowerment and involvement in decision-making, for example through the recent creation of the International School Council, stronger links with the post-16 forum and greater recognition of the school council's valuable input. The skills that students are developing through these activities are also valuable in their personal research study and challenges and will be recognised through ASDAN awards.

As the school is a language college, it has a strong commitment to international education. Plans are in place to develop the extranet to form a Kingswood partnership school council and, from there, to create a closed forum international school council by developing links with school councils from schools in France, Finland, Italy and Bulgaria. This will give young people the opportunity to use their languages as a tool for communication, to research real local, national and international community contexts, and to debate international issues.

In the future, the school hopes that additional staff training on ASDAN awards and extra time for students and staff to work together in smaller groups through the personal challenge timetable will support quality guidance for learners and embed a process of reflection on learning.